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LETTER DATED 25 APRIL 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 25 April 1997 from Mr. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Letter dated 25 April 1997 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General

Sir,

I should like to draw your attention to the continuing situation with regard to implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding. The Memorandum has not been implemented within the agreed period, and the Security Council has failed to implement resolution 986 (1995), which supposedly had a humanitarian goal. This, in addition to the delay in implementation, gives rise to serious and legitimate doubts as to whether that resolution did indeed have humanitarian goals, or whether it served a selfish and restricted policy.

The chief responsibility for this serious and deliberate delay in implementation lies with the Government of the United States of America. The increasing number of the fabricated and unjustified blocks and holds it puts on and the objections it makes to many of the contracts submitted to the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990), particularly in recent times, have demonstrated that the United States administration is using that Committee as a tool to implement its irresponsible policy directed against Iraq, by, whenever it wishes, preventing the Committee from approving contracts for food and medical supplies. This happened recently, when contracts for medical supplies became the target of United States policy. On 21 April 1997, for example, the Secretariat of the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) informed the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations in New York that the United States of America had put a hold on 21 of the contracts for the supply of medical equipment on the priority list submitted by the World Health Organization.

On 22 and 23 April 1997 the Secretariat of the Committee informed our Permanent Mission in New York that the United States of America had put a hold on a further 19 contracts from the priority list referred to above. In only three days, therefore, a hold has been put on a total of 40 contracts for medical supplies urgently required for humanitarian purposes. These were:

- Two contracts for the import of medical necessities from Italy;
- Two contracts for the import of life-saving equipment from France;
- Twenty-four contracts for the import of life-saving equipment from Jordan;
- Twelve contracts for the import of surgical and medical necessities from the United Kingdom.

Furthermore, the United States of America has rejected seven contracts for the purchase of foodstuffs, namely, one contract for rice from Viet Nam, and six contracts for the supply of sugar, cooking oil, cleaning materials and soap from Jordan.

As you will recall, during our meeting in New York on 6 March 1997 I outlined to you the serious delays being experienced in the processing of the contracts for the purchase of foodstuff and medical supplies, despite it being more than four and a half months since the entry into force of the Memorandum of Understanding. Up to 22 April 1997, the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) had approved only 118 contracts out of a total of 482 contracts submitted to the Secretariat of the Committee. In my meeting with yourself, the President and members of the Security Council, and the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990), I put forward a number of constructive suggestions with a view to improving the work and procedures of the experts and the Committee. However, none of those practical suggestions has yet been acted upon. Despite the fact that prior to the meeting of the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) held on 11 April 1997 it had been mentioned that the United States of America had lifted the hold it had put on items on the priority list, that has not so far resulted in any acceleration of the contract approval measures. On the contrary, recently the United States of America has increased the number of the holds and blocks it has put on contracts, including those on the priority list itself.

In putting forward these observations it is our intention to bring to your attention the status quo of implementation of resolution 986 (1995) and the Memorandum of Understanding, and to request you to assume your responsibilities with regard to the implementation of both those instruments, and take positive steps to prevail upon the United States of America to desist from hindering the processing of contracts for foodstuffs and medical supplies and from using this matter as a political tool. We also request you to take practical and effective steps to accelerate work to successfully implement the agreement between the United Nations and Iraq. We await the measures that you may take in this regard.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Mohammed Said AL-SAHAF
Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Iraq

Baghdad, 25 April 1997